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### Family History of Sheryl Patterson-Coulibaly

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# **The Family History of**

**Sheryl M. Patterson-Coulibaly**

**20 November 2016**

Sheryl Patterson-Coulibaly authored this family history as part of the course requirements for HIST 813 Seminar in American History: Family History offered online in fall 2016 and was submitted to the Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. Please contact the author directly with any questions or comments: Sheryl\_marteisha@yahoo.com

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A1b1a. unk

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A1a2a2. unk

A1a2b1. unk

A1a2b2. unk

A1b1a1. unk

A1b1a2. unk

A1b1b1. unk

A1b1b2. unk

A1b2a1. unk

A1b2a2. unk

A1b2b1. unk

A1b2b2. unk

## **GENERATION ONE**

**A1. Sheryl Marteisha Patterson-Coulibaly (1983- )**

**A2. Piergagnon Zoumana Coulibaly (1984- )**

Sheryl Marteisha Patterson (1983- ), was born in Tallahassee Memorial Hospital in Tallahassee, Florida to Samuel Patterson (1964- ) and Annette Jackson (1963- ). I was born at 10:06am and was 6 pounds and 15 ounces. Because my mother Annette's pregnancy was 3 weeks overdue, her water had to be broken to induce labor. Labor took 30 minutes, but I was born naturally and healthy. My parents were never married and separated shortly after my birth. I would not see my father again until I was in my mid-20s.

As a child, I was incredibly smart and advanced. I began walking at 10 months old and learned to read to myself at three years old. Although I was advanced, I was considered a good child who was simply curious. I was also extremely talkative, enjoyed having my hair fixed in large curls, and loved to play dress up in my mother and grandmother's fancy shoes. In 1985 my mother had a son Armel Smith, followed by a final son in 1987, Rodericus Harris.

Age three was a very eventful year for me. I nearly drowned at my aunt and uncle's home accidentally one summer day. Their

home had two stories, a basement, and a pool. Certain children in the family would often gather there to socialize with one another. The first and last time I saw the movie *Nightmare on Elm Street*, I was in the basement with my cousin T.J (1977), and his friends. T.J.'s mom, my aunt specifically said I was not allowed to participate in the viewing because I was too young and it would scare me. But we did not listen and they allowed me to watch it anyway. I could not sleep alone for a week after watching that movie. To this day, I do not watch scary movies because I would not be able to sleep afterwards.

Like any other year, T.J. invited a few friends over for an end of the school year pool party. I was there to spend the weekend with the family. At the pool party, I wore a blue one piece swimsuit with silver tassels on the front. T.J. had taken me out into the pool many times on different occasions, ensuring that I stayed afloat. This particular time, T.J. took me out, but did not pay attention to me as closely. This could have been because he was socializing with his friends. Either way, I sunk to the bottom of the pool. Irene (1948), T.J's mom, jumped into the pool with all of her clothes on to save me. Perhaps this is why I have such a strong bond with my aunt today. Throughout my life she would save me time in time again, but in a more emotional sense. My aunt and uncle sold that house on Beach Drive a few months later to avoid this ever happening again. I

was devastated! I loved that house and the neighborhood. But it is because of this experience that I never learned to swim and often avoid getting in pools.<sup>1</sup>

It was also at the age of 3 that I began to be repeatedly molested by a family member. This devastated me and caused my personality to begin to change into a more withdrawn and introverted person. I would not actually tell anyone in my family what happened to me until my mid-20s.

While I was born in Tallahassee, Florida, I resided with my family in the nearby small town of Quincy. I attended Stewart Street Elementary School for pre-kindergarten. It was there that I was labeled gifted. The teachers wanted my mother to agree to move me to the next grade level, but my mother refused preferring that I remain with students my own age. My mother unenrolled me from the school and kept me home until the following school year. While at home for that year, I continued to read daily and practice writing my letters and numbers. I also spent a lot of time with my great grandmother and great aunt while my mother worked. I often watched *The Price is Right* and *Family Feud* with my aunt. This would be followed by CBS soap

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<sup>1</sup> T.J. and I remember the story completely different. I remember the story as told above. T.J. does not remember taking me in the pool. He remembers me falling into the pool while no one was watching. Irene does not know how I ended up in the pool at all. But she does remember jumping into the pool to save me.



operas, The Young and the Restless, The Bold and the Beautiful, As the World Turns, and The Guiding Light. In the evening, we would all watch Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy, followed by the evening news. To this day, I watch Jeopardy nearly every night and The Young and the Restless when I can catch it during the summer. I have even watched the Young and the Restless in the Ivory Coast in French.

After that year, I was enrolled in George W. Monroe Elementary School for kindergarten. Again, the faculty wanted me to be moved to the next grade, and again, my mother refused. Later, I would view my mother's refusal to take the schools advice as a ridiculous decision. Perhaps my mother did not fully understand what positive experiences would have been given to me had she allowed me to move up a grade. Perhaps I would have moved up a grade and would have found the work too advanced. Either way, it was at George W. Monroe that I was able to make friends with several young people who I would remain friends with for many years.

While in elementary school I was on the safety patrol, was a student helper, excelled in the accelerated reader program, and joined the Girls Scouts of America. Unfortunately, my mother worked a lot and did not have time to support me in these activities. I spent most evenings with my great-grandmother Elmira Belford Jackson (1926- 2011). Elmira lived in a modest

home about a mile from our apartment. Elmira did not own a car and could not drive, so she walked most places. However, because my mother was a single mother and worked a lot, Elmira lived with us during the school week. On the weekends, I and my siblings would walk with Elmira to her home with her older sister Rosebud (1922-2002) and older brother Roosevelt (1924-1999).

### **Weekends, Food, and Family**

Weekends were always exciting at Elmira's house. I enjoyed having an acre of land to ride my bike across and several trees which bore fruit and nuts. I was also free to sit and read for long periods of time as I did not have any chores when I was with Elmira. Weekends were filled with food and family. Saturday mornings would begin at 6:30am when Elmira's younger brother Joseph (1928- 2009) would come to visit for breakfast. Joseph was a brick layer and would often employ many of the men in the family. He would also employ the women at times, but he never paid the women the same wage as the men even though they were responsible for the same duties. One summer, during my high school years, I told my uncle he was misogynistic for refusing to pay women the same as men. I also told him it was unfair that he did not allow me to go out to the home sites to work. I was his nearly free secretary. My only responsibilities were to answer the phone, take messages, and make sure the phone lines

remained clear. Joseph did not have an official office. When people wanted to contact him and contract him for a job, they called Elmira's home. Joseph always said he was semi-retired and worked when he felt like it.

Elmira always made pancakes and sausage for breakfast on Saturdays. Roosevelt never ate. He would complain the food upset his stomach. For many years he was an alcoholic. The family did not speak of his condition at all. Generally, he was tolerated, and eventually he got sober.

Often on Saturdays, Elmira would make brownies for whomever was available to eat them. I loved to help Elmira bake brownies because she always let me lick the spoon and the bowl. Elmira was also responsible for cooking Saturday's lunch. She almost always prepared perlow rice, which was simply rice and chicken cooked together in one pot. I strongly dislike perlow rice and would avoid eating it as often as possible. Family members would come by around lunch time to eat and leave with a large Country Crock butter bowl full of brownies. Elmira only had one rule, you must bring your Country Crock bowl back to get brownies next week. If one did not have their bowl, he or she did not receive any brownies. On birthdays and special occasions, Elmira would make what she called the Chocolate Pancake. This was a large brownie in a deep pan. This brownie sometimes had pecans if

there were any on her tree. Finally, the brownie was topped with a thick layer of chocolate frosting.

Rosebud would usually make Saturday dinner, which the entire family would come over to eat. Saturday dinner routinely consisted of fried chicken and biscuits. Rosebud also smoked cigarettes, Winston Light 100s. She would always smoke while she cooked. Often, I would joke to my siblings that the biscuits were very good because I saw the long train of cigarette ashes fall into the dough. This, of course, was not true at all. But it usually worked my brothers up into fits of giggles and hiccups. Sometimes I would find myself scolded for making my brother Armel laugh too hard. Armel was diagnosed with asthma at an early age. I was also diagnosed with asthma, but grew out of it as the years went along. Armel did not.

Sundays were always reserved for church. As a young child through my teen years, I would attend Mt. Zion Primitive Baptist Church on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays and Antioch Missionary Baptist Church on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays with Elmira. At Mt. Zion, Elmira was the head usher. Rosebud was a mother of the church and sang in the choir. Joseph was the head deacon and a trustee of the church. I was in the youth choir and my brothers served on the youth usher board.

Each Sunday, everyone in the house would wake up for breakfast around 7am. Breakfast usually consisted of grits and

sausage. Joseph would come to the house and pick up me and her brothers for Sunday School. Rosebud would often be left behind because she was not dressed and ready to leave when Joseph arrived. Each Sunday when Joseph was ready to leave for Sunday School he would say, "And they that were ready, went in." This is a reference to the parable of the 10 virgins in book of Matthew 25:10. Everyone knew this was his signal that he was leaving and anyone riding with him at this time should get into his pickup truck. He would drop off me and my brothers at the church and give the opening prayer.

Sunday School began at 9:30am. Joseph would then go back to the house and pick up a very furious Rosebud. He would make a third trip back to the house at the close of Sunday to pick up Elmira for the 11:00am service. The distance between the house and the church was only about 3 miles. At the end of the service, Elmira and Rosebud would ride in the cab of the pickup truck, while the children rode in the bed of the truck.

Sunday dinner usually consisted of several large dishes and would last for the remainder of the day. While the entire family, immediate and distant, would participate in most meals on the weekends, the family literally opened up their doors to the neighborhood. Elmira would invite everyone over for a hot meal. Strangers would leave as friends, and friends always had a grand time.

When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, my mother stopped allowing me and my brothers to attend Mt. Zion Primitive Baptist Church with the rest of the family, and drove us to church with her instead. The pastor of Mt. Zion had been found guilty of drug trafficking and my mother no longer trusted the leadership of the church.<sup>2</sup> This was super embarrassing because my family has been associated with that church for generations. Everyone knew we attended that church and would ask ridiculous questions. The name of the new church we attended was Miracle Temple Church of God in Christ. This church was a lot different from what we were used to. Miracle Temple was loud and the members often found themselves on the floor of the church. I would later learn that these people were filled with the Holy Ghost, but these behaviors baffled me. Sundays at Miracle Temple were long days. Sunday School began at 10:00am. The main service began at 11:30am and seemed to stretch on all day. Finally, there was an evening service at 6:30pm which we were expected to attend.

While Mt. Zion's congregation was a bit conservative, Miracle Temple was extremely conservative. I, suddenly, could not to wear my very long hair down and free. I was forced to

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<sup>2</sup> As reported in the Orlando Sentinel "Preacher Pleads Not Guilty on Drug-dealing Charges," *Orlando Sentinel*, 20 October, 1995, accessed 21 April, 2016, [http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1995-10-20/news/9510190934\\_1\\_crack-cocaine-tallahassee-charged-with-dealing](http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1995-10-20/news/9510190934_1_crack-cocaine-tallahassee-charged-with-dealing). It should be noted that this preacher is now out of prison and is ministering again. Since his release, he has developed a program that targets at risk young men.

wear my hair in a severe bun or a pony tail most days. It was also no longer acceptable for me to wear pants or dresses which may show my legs. I could not wear open toe shoes or heels. Most jewelry was also forbidden. I complained to Elmira about the strict rules and begged to come back to her regular church, but my mother would not allow it. Once I entered college, I stopped attending Miracle Temple and found my own church under the Primitive Baptist umbrella. After about a year of attending that church, however, I would leave Christianity all together as I found most of the pastors I had come in contact with immoral and hypocritical.

During the 1995-1996 school year, my mother moved to Tallahassee. My brothers and I were allowed to live with Elmira full time so that we could continue the school year at their respective schools. Once the school year finished, we remained with Elmira for the summer. The summer Olympics were held in Atlanta that year. The family spent many hours cheering on the United States during many different matches that were televised. It was during this Olympic Games, I fell in love with gymnastics. Ironically, I would go on to teach the son of one of the Bulgarian Olympic gymnasts from the Atlanta games. That child was a joy to teach and his father was amazed I remembered him from those games. At the end of the summer of 1996, my siblings and I moved to a housing projects in Tallahassee to

live with our mother. There were roaches in the apartment and drug dealers openly sat on each corner. This was very different than how I was used to living. I was not afraid, but I was very lucky to be able to get along with people who were different from me. The drug dealers recognized my intelligence and would often encourage me to go to school and stay out of trouble. I do not agree with the lifestyle they chose to live, but I can see that they were overall good people.

The 1996-1997 school year, I was enrolled in Augusta Raa Middle School. I did not excel. This was the first time I was exposed to white people, and people outside of my tight knit community in general. I felt as if my teachers looked down on me because I was clearly poor and transferred into the school from a poor country town. I felt inadequate because my hair was not shiny and straight. My body was already curvy and I could not fit into, nor afford, the high end name brand clothing that my classmates wore. While I managed to earn grades well enough for me to be promoted to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, my self-esteem and confidence suffered greatly. In high school, I was known as a painfully shy girl who tried my best to be invisible. It was not until I met Rod Durham in English class, my freshman year at Leon High School, did I begin to revert back to my curious nature. Rod Durham is the reason I am a teacher today. He taught me that it



was perfectly normal for people to be different and to accept people and ourselves just as we are.<sup>3</sup>

While I was able to finally thrive, my brothers were not adjusting as well. Armel was retained twice in middle school. He repeated grades 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Later it was discovered that he had an undiagnosed learning disability. Rodericus sought refuge in the church. While all of the children were forced to attend church nightly, Rodericus actually enjoyed it. By this time, I was singing in the adult church choir, the school chorus, and a traveling gospel choir. Armel played football for the middle and high school when his grades allowed him eligibility. While all of the children managed to cope with their feelings of leaving their home, our mother did not seem to notice the severe depression I exhibited. Elmira, once again, came to live with the family during the week. With Elmira in the home, things seemed to be happier.

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately Rod died in April of 2016. His funeral was attended by many of his former students. While the grief was present, it was clear Rod cared about all of his students. I try to show that same level of care with each of my students today.

## **Growing Up in Quincy, Florida**

Quincy, Florida is located in the northern portion of the state of Florida in Gadsden County. According to the 2010 census, there are 6,975 residents.<sup>4</sup> My family has lived in this county for seven generations. My grandmother, great-grandmother, and great-great-great grandmothers all worked at on tobacco farms in Quincy. Quincy was once famous for adapting a form of a hybrid tobacco leaf, which is known as the Florida Wrapper.

Although Quincy is located in Florida, it is located in Northern Florida. This means Quincy has more characteristics which would resemble Alabama or Georgia than Southern Florida. Residents enjoy hot humid summers, and short mild to cold, winters. Because Quincy, Florida is a small town, most of the residents are either related or know each other very well. I lived on the same street as several relatives growing up. Living so close in proximity to each other fostered a different sort of family bond that one may not have if family members live farther away.

On weekends and during the summer, I would often walk with my great-grandmother Elmira to visit her siblings. Everyone lived within a 3 block radius of each other. Children were also

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<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia. "Quincy, Florida." Accessed 22 January, 2016. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quincy,\\_Florida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quincy,_Florida).

allowed to visit friends freely. Often at the end of the day, one would hear parents standing on their porch yelling for their children to return home. My friends and I would often run to the top of the road and jump on the back of pickup trucks. Once we reached the store about a half of a mile away, we would jump off. We would go inside the store, and return home in the same manner. The speed limit throughout the city is only 25 miles per hour. And of course this was before people were required to wear seatbelts by law with fidelity.

## **Love and Marriage**

After undergraduate school at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, FL, I got a job at Verizon Wireless as a Customer Care Representative in Tallahassee. I then transferred and obtain a promotion to Customer Service and Operations manager in New York, New York. One day as I was leaving my office, I bumped into a stranger on the street. I had a bad habit of texting and walking. I did not apologize to the stranger, but I told him he should watch where he was going. When he apologized, I commented on his accent. We continued a conversation on the street for several minutes before I told the young man I had to go because I wanted to watch the new Andrew Jackson documentary on PBS later that evening. The stranger, Piergagnon (1984), said he too wanted to watch the show, but did not have a television. After

calling to ensure my roommate was home, I invited Piergagnon over to watch the documentary with me. We married 6 weeks later, August, 2010.

Today Piergagnon and I have moved out of the city and are now living in Florida actively trying to expand our family. I am a social studies teacher at a college prep school and he is an analyst.

While Elmira passed away several years ago, the lessons she taught me have remained. She impressed upon everyone that she knew to be kind and compassionate to everyone because you never know what that person is dealing with.

## GENERATION TWO

### **A1a. Annette Jackson (1963- )**

### **A1b. Samuel Patterson (1964- )**

My mother Annette (1963) was born in Quincy, Florida to Joyce Jackson and William Bradwell. My grandparents never married. Even though her father's family lived only one street away, she did not know her father or his family very well. Her father died while she was fairly young, and it was not until she was well into adulthood that she connected with his side of the family.

Because her mother Joyce was an unwed mother, she decided to leave her tight knight community and move to Orlando. During the early 60s it was quite embarrassing to have children outside of marriage. Initially, Joyce took her youngest daughter to Orlando with her leaving Annette to be raised by her grandmother Elmira. However, after two years, Joyce returned to Quincy and left both daughters with Elmira. Because her mother did not raise my mother, my mother felt a sense of abandonment. Their relationship never fully recovered.

Annette attended the local schools in Quincy with her younger sister and younger cousin who was also raised in the

home with her. After high school, Annette would have three children, me, Armel (1985) and Rodericus (1987). She focused the next several years on raising her children as a single mother. In 2016 my mother finally graduated from college with an associate's degree. This was one of her most proud moments because she never thought she would have the opportunity to attend or finish a degree.

### GENERATION THREE

**A1a1. Joyce Jackson (1907-1941)**

**A1a2. William Bradwell (unk-unk)**

**A1b1. unk**

**A1b2. Unk**

Joyce Ann Jackson was born in July of 1946 to Elmira Belford Jackson (1926-2011) and Lester Jackson (1927-1979). Joyce grew up in the small town of Quincy Florida. Her mother was a domestic worker for several white families in the area and her father worked as a dry cleaner and clothes presser. As a baby, Joyce was nicknamed Pat by a family member. When asked why she decided Joyce should be called Pat, the aunt responded "she looks like a Pat!"<sup>5</sup> When Joyce was three her parents separated, but the couple did not divorce. Joyce, her mother, and her sister Irene (1948) went to live with her grandparents.<sup>6</sup> Joyce's grandfather was a preacher and her grandmother was a

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<sup>5</sup> This story was told to Sheryl by her Great Grandmother Elmira as a child and is recounted now as a memory.

<sup>6</sup> Joyce Jackson (retired accountant) in discussion with the author, April 2016. Joyce was so young when these events happened, she did not remember much about the time. Joyce did mention that she lived in St. Petersburg as a baby with her parents, but her sister was born in Quincy.

farm worker on their own farm. Although she never divorced her first husband, Joyce's mother would eventually marry again. However, Joyce lived most of her childhood on Erie street in her grandparents' home.

Joyce attended public school in Quincy, Florida. She attended Steven's High School during segregation. While Joyce's mother spent a lot of time interacting with white people in a domestic capacity, Joyce had very little opportunity to do so.<sup>7</sup> While in school, church, and within her community Joyce was surrounded by people of color. This was not abnormal as the town of Quincy Florida, was and remains racially divided by the railroad tracks.

As a child, Joyce learned to enjoy sports as she was raised around mostly men. Joyce's favorite sport is football. As a grandmother, she would watch her grandsons playing NFL Madden on the Nintendo game system. Joyce would often dictate which plays her grandsons were allowed to run, much to their dismay. Joyce's favorite college football team is the Florida State Seminoles. Although Joyce did not attend Florida State University, it is well known and accepted that her children or grandchildren are not allowed to attend the University of Florida, the direct

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<sup>7</sup> Irene Jackson Gaines (retired principal) in discussion with the author, April 2016. A well-known family story involves Joyce's sister Irene and the racial discrimination she was subjected to as a young lady attempting to buy a soda at a soda fountain shop in town.



rival of Florida State University. Recently, Joyce has learned the rules of soccer as a way to bond with Sheryl's husband Piergagnon (1984).

As a young adult, Joyce attended church regularly as was the expectation within her family. However, at the age of 17 she became pregnant with her first child, a daughter, Annette (1963). The father of her daughter, William was a distant cousin and opted not to marry Joyce. This daughter would go on to have a daughter of her own, Sheryl (1983). Because of Joyce's predicament, she never finished high school.

Joyce left school and went to work various jobs to provide for her child. Four years later, Joyce once again found herself pregnant with another daughter. Still unmarried, she took her youngest daughter to Orlando to live. After some time, she returned her to Quincy to live with her mother, Elmira, and went back to Orlando. For many years the family told everyone Joyce's daughters shared the same father. It wasn't until the early 2000s that Joyce's younger daughter found out that she had a different father and he was alive. Joyce never married.

While living in Orlando, Joyce found work as a maid in various hotels. As she was working in one particular hotel, the staff decided to organize and demand better working wages and conditions. The hotel refused their demands. Because of this refusal, entire maid staff quit. Joyce, at the time, was living

with her cousin Barbara, Barbara's husband, and their children. Joyce knew she could not return home and tell her cousin that she was unemployed with two children in Quincy she had to provide for. As luck would have it, one of the maids heard a new hotel was opening in the same vicinity. The entire maid staff went to the new hotel that same day, and were hired. Joyce noted this was a very scary time because she was not sure if she would quickly find work again. She only knew that it was very important for the staff to stick together in their decision to quit.<sup>8</sup>

After some time, Joyce decided to follow her father to California. She lived in Los Angeles for 2 years with her father's family. While in California, she worked for a publishing company where she bound books. During this time, she sent money to her children very often, but did not have the opportunity to visit them often. This distance would eventually cause a rift in the relationship between Joyce and her daughters.<sup>9</sup> Joyce's youngest daughter does not consider Joyce to be her mother because she did not raise her and Annette only calls Joyce when she wants to guilt her into giving her money or

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<sup>8</sup> Joyce Jackson (retired accountant) in discussion with the author, April 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Annette Jackson (medical assistant) in discussion with the author, March 2016

doing a favor. Joyce, however, does have a very close relationship with her granddaughter Sheryl.

After two years on the west coast, Joyce moved back to Orlando from California. It was at this time that Joyce enrolled at Seminole Community College. Although Joyce did not have a high school diploma, she was allowed to take a general knowledge test. Upon passing the general knowledge test, Joyce was admitted into the community college. Joyce received an associate's degree in business administration in 1991. It took Joyce nearly 10 years to complete this degree. Often, she took classes one at a time and sometimes took semesters off to save the money to pay for her books. The company she worked for at the time, NCR, paid for her classes. At NCR Joyce was an electronic tester for the company. Upon completion of this degree, she began taking classes at the University of Central Florida. Because Joyce had already received an associate's degree, UCF did not ask for proof of a high school diploma. In 2016, Joyce received her second associate's degree in business from Seminole Community College. Upon completion, she enrolled to finish her bachelors in finance. She will graduate in the spring of 2018.

Joyce would eventually find work at the bank SouthTrust as a temporary accountant. Joyce worked for South Trust through the temp agency for so long, the bank employees forgot she was a

temp and sent her to an official employee meeting as the department expert at the corporate office. Upon her arrival, the human resources official informed Joyce she needed her employee number because she could not find her in the system. When Joyce informed human resources she was a temp, the human resources manager was so impressed she was hired as a full time employee. It is because of Joyce's educational and work experience that she proudly tells anyone she is a self-made woman. Eventually Wells Fargo bank purchased South Trust. It was from Wells Fargo bank that Joyce retired. Before Joyce retired, she would often be summoned to federal court as an expert witness in many bank fraud and wire fraud cases.

Since retirement, Joyce has lived a quiet but fulfilling life enjoying her friends and family. Often, Joyce will spend the day with her friends from church at the movie theatre. She also enjoys taking girls road trips. Beyond that, Joyce teaches her family members about making sound financial decisions. Because Joyce and her granddaughter enjoy such a great relationship, every Saturday morning Joyce and Sheryl speak on the phone. Often, the two speak about financial investments, budgets, and large purchases. Joyce also spends every Thanksgiving with Sheryl and Piergagnon at their home.

Early in life, Joyce was baptized and joined church. Joyce still spends a considerable amount of her free time serving in

the church. Like her mother, Elmira, Joyce is an usher. Joyce also finds joy in helping her church peers. This often involves driving friends with failing eyesight to doctors' appointments, picking up ladies for church, or even taking the ladies grocery shopping.

## GENERATION FOUR

A1a1a. Elmira Belford Jackson (1924-2011)

A1a1b. Lester Jackson (1927-1979)

A1a2a. unk

A1a2b. unk

A1b1a. unk

A1b1b. unk

A1b2a. unk

A1b2b. unk

Elmira Belford Jackson was born in Quincy, Florida in 1924. She had nine brothers and sisters, but only five of those brothers and sisters were her mother's children. The other three children did not live in the home with Elmira and her parents even though their mother died while the children were fairly

young.<sup>10</sup> Among Elmira's siblings was a set of twins, Joseph and Josephine. Josephine died around age 3 of pneumonia.<sup>11</sup> Elmira's mother was a farm worker on their tobacco farm and her father was a local preacher.

Elmira never graduated from high school. When she was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, her sister Rosebud was accepted to Spelman College of nursing in Atlanta. Rosebud was working as a maid to prominent white family in town. Upon telling the family she was leaving, Rosebud suggested her sister take over as their maid. Elmira would work for that family for over 50 years.

In 1946, Elmira married Lester Jackson(1927-1979).<sup>12</sup> The couple had two children Joyce, also known as Pat, and Irene also known as Rene. Eventually, Elmira and Lester would separate and

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<sup>10</sup> "Florida State Census, 1945," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/MNXD-M3L> : accessed 13 April 2016), Elmira Belford, Quincy, Gadsden, Florida; citing line 5, State Archives, Tallahassee; FHL microfilm 2,425,190.

<sup>11</sup> Until recently, no one in the Belford family knew where Josephine is buried. It is the goal of the family to physically find the plot and possibly move her to the family plot.

"Florida Deaths, 1877-1939," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/FP31-7SM> : accessed 13 April 2016), Josephine Belford, 15 Nov 1932; citing Quincy, Gadsden, Florida, reference cn 16901; FHL microfilm 2,135,490.

<sup>12</sup> Upon inspection of the marriage license, and birth records of Elmira and Lester's first child, it is apparent that Elmira was already 5 months pregnant at the time of this wedding. It is interesting to note, her father the preacher did not marry the couple, but her mother was the official witness.

"Florida Marriages, 1830-1993", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/QKH4-8CWG> : accessed 13 April 2016), Lester Jackson and Elmira V Belford, 1946.

Lester would move to California. Elmira and her children would move back home with her parents. Eventually, Elmira would marry Ted Jackson. Oddly enough, Elmira never divorced Lester, so technically she had two husbands at one time. To avoid questions about her first marriage, Elmira and Ted went to Georgia to marry. Because both husbands had the same last name, people in the community either did not know that Elmira was married to two different men, or they simply forgot.

Elmira and Ted also separated. Ted had a serious drinking problem and would often spend all of the money on alcohol. This left Elmira to try and figure out how to care for the family with very little funds. Eventually, Elmira packed up her children and moved them back to her parents' home across town. In true Elmira fashion, she did not divorce Ted, but she did not marry again.

Of Elmira's siblings, she lived with her sister Rosebud and her brother Roosevelt most of her adult life. Roosevelt was her eldest brother. Although he was married with a family of his own, he preferred to live in his childhood home with his siblings. Roosevelt's family wife and children only lived one street away.

Roosevelt, like his younger brothers and most men of their generation, was drafted into the United States Army during the Korean War. Before he left to go to the war, Roosevelt was an



upstanding deacon in the church and was a transfer truck driver. Upon his return, Roosevelt had developed a severe drinking problem. His personal and professional life deteriorated and he found himself depending on Elmira to remind him to take care of himself. This behavior was seen as an embarrassment to the family as Roosevelt rapidly found himself identified as the town drunk. While Roosevelt did have a severe problem with alcohol, he still managed to upkeep the family farm and was always very kind to the children in the family and neighborhood. Roosevelt would often plant carrots on the farm simply because Sheryl enjoyed them.

After many years, Roosevelt sought help at the VA clinic. He stopped drinking and was able to get his driver's license again. Eventually, Roosevelt was reinstated as a deacon of the church.

Elmira spent her life trying to instill a sense of education in her children and grandchildren. Often she would tell them they could be anything they wanted to be if they tried hard enough. While she herself never attended college, she ensure that her children had the desire to do so.

Elmira's younger daughter, Irene, attended Florida A&M University and became a teacher. While attending school, Elmira would often visit Irene. In her older years Elmira grew to love the university, particularly the band known as the Marching 100. She would attend the homecoming game yearly well into her golden

years and enjoy the marching band and drum majors. At her funeral, the drum majors attended in their uniforms as a sign of respect for her.

According to the family and neighbors, everyone knew Elmira as Granny. She often babysat children for free and fed anyone in the neighborhood who needed a meal. She was beloved by many. As she aged, she developed Alzheimer's disease and did not remember many of the people she came to know and love.

From this union, Elmira and Lester had two children, 4 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

## **Conclusion**

Many families have secretes that they prefer to keep hidden, tucked away from future generations. My family is no different. As I conducted my research, I uncovered stories long forgotten, buried in pain, and completely unknown to living family members. While this research garnered uncomfortable and painful moments, it also created fond memories and has forever bonded my family members together.

The history of my family, and every family, is worth preserving and cherishing no matter what is found. Through these few pages, my mother, siblings, grandmother, great-grandmother, their siblings, and partners will live on. Their spirits sit with me and reassure me of who I am and from where my family came. For this unique experience, I am truly grateful.